



Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby Cagle, MSW
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Reg Griffin

404-656-0239

reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov

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DECAL promoting Infant Toddler Language and Literacy

*Conferences will teach strategies to support language development
in the infant and toddler classroom*

ATLANTA, Ga., (March 22 , 2012) – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning’s (DECAL) Infant Toddler Network supports infants and toddlers by providing Georgia’s early care and education professionals with multi-faceted and culturally responsive resources that support children’s physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development.

Starting in April, specialists from the Infant Toddler Network in partnership with the Rollins Center for Language & Learning faculty will be hosting statewide conferences on how to support language and literacy development in infant and toddler classrooms. The conferences will reinforce the understanding that relationships between teachers and young children coupled with intentional teaching practices are at the heart of language development.

The conferences are scheduled for April 14, 2012, in Augusta; May 5, 2012, in Macon; May 19, 2012, in Savannah; June 2, 2012, in Duluth; and June 16, 2012, in Albany. Each conference will begin with registration at 7:30 AM and run from 8:30 AM to 4:15 PM.

The first three years constitute the most significant developmental period of a child’s life. Early care and education lays the foundation for a child’s success in school. A rich and stimulating language environment is critical to early language development.

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The conference encourages teachers to read, talk, and push and pull vocabulary all day long in their classrooms. The Conference recognizes the fact that infant and toddler teachers can make a difference in a child's life and can support their success in preschool and beyond.

According to Bobby Cagle, commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, promoting school readiness begins in the infant and toddler classrooms. "Our youngest learners have the right to be exposed to language all day long," Commissioner Cagle explained, "Infant and Toddler teachers have a unique opportunity to introduce vocabulary, pull out and extend language and to help our children become keenly interested in books, sounds, and words."

"The Rollins Center for Language & Learning of the Atlanta Speech School is so proud to be working in partnership with DECAL," said Comer Yates, executive director for the Atlanta Speech School. "The research makes it clear that it is essential for our youngest learners to be exposed to ongoing vocabulary and conversation in their nurseries and classrooms. We are excited about supporting 1100 teachers in their efforts to give Georgia's children the strongest possible start."

DECAL is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. The Rollins Center funded in part by the generosity of the O. Wayne Rollins Foundation serves as a resource for education professionals by sharing research-based language and reading approaches for the benefit of children and their families, schools, and communities. For more information regarding the conferences call 404.463.2794 or e-mail to infanttoddlers@dec.al.ga.gov.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.al.ga.gov.